

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY

EAST-WEST STRUCTURES

FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

DUBLIN CASTLE

9 JUNE, 1995

4. This point is demonstrated in paragraph 44 of the Framework Document which addresses "issues of law and order" which are "closely intertwined with the issues of political consensus". It states, "For so long as these matters are not devolved, it will be for the governments to consider ways in which a climate of peace, new institutions and the growth of political agreement may offer new possibilities and opportunities for enhancing community identification with policing" This evinces the reality that East-West structures cannot operate as simply a Dublin-London corridor with no meaning for relationships within Ireland or bearing on issues in the North.
5. We note the two Governments' reference in paragraph 39 of the Framework Document, under the heading "East-West Structures", to "a new and more broadly-based Agreement, developing and extending their co-operation, reflecting the totality of relationships between the two islands, and dedicated to fostering co-operation, reconciliation and agreement in Ireland at all levels". This counters any possible confusion which might arise from the fact that some explications of Strand 3 or East-West Structures refer to..... "between the two governments" (ref British Government's Introduction to "Frameworks for the Future" and paragraph 5 of the 26 March, 1991 statement by Peter Brooke on the basis for Talks) while others refer to relationships "between the peoples of these islands" (ref British Prime Minister's forward to "Frameworks for the Future" and paragraph 2 of Brooke Statement above quoted in paragraph 12 of A New Framework for Agreement).

9. The programme of work for the Conference and the nature of its implementation would have to take due account of such other arrangements as exist in respect of relationships and issues between North and South and within the North. Appropriate procedures for involvement in or association with the work of the conference, where relevant, by representatives of other institutions would have to be agreed on a principled and practical basis. We welcome the fact that both Governments as well as envisaging such procedures in paragraphs 48 and 49 also recognise the need for the so-called "fallsafe mechanism" in paragraph 47.
10. While recognising the Intergovernmental Conference as the "principal instrument", the SDLP also attach importance to enhancing the Inter-Parliamentary process. This process with its more representative membership span can contribute significantly to mutual understanding, common policy appraisal and co-operative initiative affecting a diverse range of issues and interests. The Inter-Parliamentary Body and the Conference could, among other approaches, sponsor productive linkages among local and regional authorities in given areas of policy development and delivery, not least in the context of EU programmes.

13. East-West Structures will be no less significant for Unionists. Like Nationalists in the North they are fearful of being trapped as the ultimate minority and of being abandoned as the ultimate minority. Meaningful East-West Structures can serve to pre-assure and reassure both traditions. In this respect the proposed "Charter or Covenant.... for the protection of fundamental rights of everyone living in Ireland" would have certain East-West dimensions.
14. This is implicit in paragraph 52 which states "It could incorporate also an enduring commitment on behalf of all the people of the island to guarantee and protect the rights, interests, ethos and dignity of the Unionists community in any all-Ireland framework that might be developed with respect in the future, to at least the same extent as provided for the Nationalist community in the context of Northern Ireland under the Structures and Provisions of the new Agreement". Such a commitment is consistent with views forwarded by the SDLP during the 1992 Inter-party Talks. Given the significance of such protections and guarantees for Nationalists to take account of history, identity and political reality, we can equally recognise the right and requirement for Unionists to enjoy the same. We acknowledge that this can only be accommodated and achieved with a meaningful British-Irish framework.